
The United States Navy on the World Wide Web
A service of the Navy Office of Information, Washington DC
send feedback/questions to comments@chinfo.navy.mil
The United States Navy web site is found on the Internet at
<http://www.navy.mil>

Navy & Marine Corps Medical News
#03-07
Feb. 28, 2003

Bethesda Staff Gets Orders to Join Comfort
Navy Medical Corps Celebrates Birthday March 3
BUMED Claimancy 18 Sailor of the Year Finalists Announced
Navy Medical Officer Takes First Place in Spec Ops Race
Carucci Receives AMA's Highest Award for Public Service
Halyburton Color Guard Presents Flag at Rockingham
Jax Graduates Nurse Anesthetists
Sperm Bank Deposits Are Your Personal Business
HealthWatch: Glaucoma Can Steal Vision Without Warning
-usn-

Bethesda Staff Gets Orders to Join Comfort
From Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs
BETHESDA, Md. - Almost 800 Navy Medicine
personnel, nearly all from National Naval Medical
Center Bethesda, received their orders yesterday to
join the USNS Comfort, which left Jan. 6 from its
pier in Baltimore in support of Operation Enduring
Freedom.

The personnel were called together at an all-hands meeting at the hospital and told of their orders. Physicians, nurses, hospital corpsmen, medical specialists such as pharmacists and psychologists, flight deck crew, cooks, chaplains and support technicians will fly to join the ship. When they arrive, they will ready the ship so that it can operate at its full, 1,000-bed capability.

It wasn't a surprise for any of the personnel, including Bethesda Commander Rear Adm. Donald C. Arthur, Medical Corps.

"This is the job we train for, taking care of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines," he said.

The 200 crewmembers who left with the ship in January have been working to ready the ship for the full medical staff, including taking on of supplies, and have already been training daily in the use of decontamination stations designed to treat people exposed to chemical or biological weapons.

Comfort is one of two Navy hospital ships that are among the world's largest trauma centers. Comfort has 12 operating rooms as well as all the other facilities necessary to support a large hospital.

This is the largest number of personnel called up to support a Comfort deployment since Operation

Desert Storm 12 years ago.

-usn-

Navy Medical Corps Celebrates Birthday March 3
From Navy Medicine Office of the Medical Corps

WASHINGTON - As the Navy Medical Corps celebrates its 132nd birthday, it is fitting to reflect upon its many successes and the challenges ahead.

The 5,016 active duty and Reserve physicians who compose the Navy Medical Corps demonstrate an unprecedented commitment to those who have pledged their lives to defend their country. As the U.S. Navy readies itself for Operation Enduring Freedom, Navy physicians are at the tip of the spear, in the desert with Marines and at sea with Sailors. They have been responsible for new innovations in medical field operations and the development of highly mobile medical units.

No matter where Sailors and Marines may serve, the Navy Medical Corps is there to ensure the health and well being of the fighting force. The practice of Force Health Protection not only ensures the health of every active duty service member, it is also a commitment to maintain the health and well being of our military families.

The Navy Medical Corps embodies more than 47 specialties and almost 200 subspecialties, all of which serve a diverse, worldwide population. Everyday, these dedicated men and women perform research, care for the ill, and work to find new solutions to health problems.

Everyday, these physicians risk their lives to improve life for others. No better examples of the courage and sacrifice experienced by Navy physicians can be found than that of Capt. Dave Brown and Cmdr. Laurel Clark, flight surgeons and mission specialists, whose lives were lost in the Columbia space shuttle tragedy.

"How is it that we can lose so much, yet even in their death, they keep giving us strength of spirit? We're all thankful we know them, thankful they enriched so many lives, and thankful for their courage," said Rear Adm. Donald C. Arthur, chief of the Medical Corps.

As the Navy pushes forward with its "Sea Power 21" vision, Navy Medicine, too, is adapting to the changing needs of a rapidly mobile and deployable force. Medicine is a defensive weapon and an important aspect of homeland security. Capt. Robert Darling, an expert in the effects of chemical, biological, radiation, nuclear and explosives, is one of Navy Medicine's newest specialty leaders. His efforts as well as those of countless others have helped to shape the policies we will use in the war against terrorism.

Others in the Corps fight smaller but just as lethal opponents. One such physician is Capt.

Daniel Carucci, who leads the war against malaria.

As the Navy marches boldly into the 21st century, the Navy Medical Corps is ready for the challenges it will encounter. In the words of Capt. Sandra Yerkes, deputy chief of the Medical Corps, "Our physicians are the best in the world and our diversity strengthens our ability for innovation."

Happy birthday, Navy Medical Corps! Bravo Zulu!

-usn-

BUMED Claimancy 18 Sailor of the Year Finalists Announced
From Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

WASHINGTON - The three finalists for the 2003 BUMED Shore Sailor of the Year (SOY) are Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Christopher Christopher V. Dacosta, Naval Medical Research Center Silver Spring, Md., Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (SEAL) Michael T. Eggleston, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Washington, DC; and Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Kjersti E. Walker, Naval Environmental Health Center Portsmouth, Va.

According to Navy Medicine Force Master Chief Jacqueline DiRosa, all the claimancy SOY nominations were outstanding representatives of Navy Medicine.

"Each demonstrated sustained excellence in leadership, technical proficiency, motivation, and participation in community affairs," she wrote in a naval message announcing the finalists. "Each can be justifiably proud of the honor of being their command's Sailor of the year."

The finalists come to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in early March when the claimancy Sailor of the Year will be selected. He or she will compete with other Sailors from throughout the Fleet to become the Navy's SOY.

-usn-

Navy Medical Officer Takes First Place in Spec Ops Race
From Naval Special Warfare Command Public Affairs

CORONADO, Calif. - A Navy diving medical officer placed first in the women's division of the first-ever Special Operations Medical Association Challenge in Tampa, Fla.

Lt. Gina Virgilio, Medical Corps, at the Naval Special Warfare Center in Coronado, Calif., placed first in the women's division, beating out Air Force and Army special operations counterparts.

The race, which was introduced at the association's medical conference, was created to showcase the versatility, adaptability, physical and mental preparation of medical providers within the special operations community.

The exact requirements of the competition were not released prior to the start of the race in order to replicate the uncertainty that is common during special operations missions.

More than 50 men and women competed in the event that included running through the streets of Tampa, kayaking in Tampa Bay and facing simulated medical

emergencies, where racers were graded on their ability to make assessments and provide simulated patient care. For example, bay racers were challenged with intubating a victim, or inserting a breathing apparatus while on a small craft in the water.

"The race was more challenging than I imagined it would be, especially not knowing what to expect from one medical station to the next," Virgilio said. "The premise behind the race is a good example of the uncertainty involved with medical practices with special operations."

Virgilio, a native San Diegan, avid surfer and kayaker, who is usually in the water on a daily basis either at work or during liberty hours, is eagerly awaiting the opportunity to defend her championship during next year's conference. In the meantime, Virgilio has her sights set on a surgical residency following her tour at the Naval Special Warfare Center.

-usn-

Carucci Receives AMA's Highest Award for Public Service
By Doris Ryan, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

SILVER SPRING, MD - Navy Medicine's Capt. Daniel Carucci, Medical Corps, is one of nine recipients of the American Medical Association 2003 Dr. Nathan Davis Awards for Outstanding Government Service.

The association applauded Carucci's work with The International Malaria Genome Project, his research in developing DNA-based vaccines for malaria and his efforts in establishing field sites for vaccine development.

"I was surprised and humbled, considering I would be sharing the stage with well-known public figures like (Department of Health and Human Services') Tommy Thompson and Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico," said Carucci. "What the Navy team accomplished in completing the malaria genome project and current efforts in malaria vaccine development is not in the public eye but is a very critical public health issue."

Carucci pointed out that the military has a singular interest in the development of new drugs and vaccines to fight malaria. Malaria can be an ominous threat to sustained operations. In every military campaign fought in modern history where malaria was endemic, more man-days were lost due to malaria than to bullets. In World War II, 12 million days were lost; in Vietnam, nearly one million days were lost.

"So far, we have never deployed in significant numbers to some of the most intense malaria transmission areas of the world like sub-Saharan Africa," said Carucci. "It is critical for us to have a malaria vaccine to protect troops. At the same time, we know that any vaccine we develop will have broad implications to the developing world and to those who suffer from malaria most - young children and pregnant women in sub-Saharan Africa."

Carucci is no stranger to accolades; he was the Operational Flight Surgeon of the Year in 1989 and the Navy recipient of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Award for Military Medicine in 2000.

"There is no other place (than in the Navy) that would allow me to do what I have done so far," said Carucci. "I went from an operational flight surgeon taking care of thousands of Marines in remote locations to director of one of the world's most advanced malaria vaccine programs. You don't get those sorts of challenges as quickly and in such diversity outside of the military."

Carucci is the director of the malaria program at the Naval Medical Research Center in Silver Spring, Md.

-usn-

Halyburton Color Guard Presents Flag at Rockingham
By Kelly Cundiff, Halyburton Naval Hospital Cherry
Point, N.C.

CHERRY POINT, N.C. - Before the call of "gentlemen start your engines," before the roar of the turbo-charged machines and the smell of high octane wafting through the air at Rockingham's NASCAR Winston Cup races, there's the presentation of colors and the national anthem.

Last Sunday, it was Halyburton Naval Hospital's Color Guard that carried the American flag for the gathered crowd and television audience.

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Chad McFall, Hospital Corpsmen Lee Thomason and Chad Lopez, and Hospital Apprentice Crystal McMillen, rendered the colors while the crowd stood for the national anthem.

"We appreciate the invitation from NASCAR," said Hospital Commanding Officer Capt. Don Thompson, Medical Service Corps. "The Sailors did a great job and enjoyed themselves. They will have fond memories of this for the rest of their lives."

Winston Cup drivers Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Michael Waltrip took time out to pose for pictures with the Sailors before their pre-race stage appearances.

The color guard has been invited back in November for the fall race at the North Carolina Motor Speedway.

"We'll definitely be at the fall race to render the national colors again," said Command Master Chief Charles Ratcliff, who also was the officer in charge of the detail. "This was just a great experience."

-usn-

Jax Graduates Nurse Anesthetists
By Lt.j.g. Michelle Spears, Naval Hospital
Jacksonville

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - Lt. Cmdr. Janet Dewees and

Lt. Cary Schultz, both Nurse Corps members, graduated from Naval Hospital Jacksonville's Navy Nurse Corps

Anesthesia Program, the seventh and eighth nurses to graduate from the demanding training since its implementation in 1999.

They will take their certification exams to be certified registered nurse anesthetists in March.

The NNCAP is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia in association with the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists and Georgetown University. It awards a masters' degree upon completion of the program.

Nurse Corps officers with at least four years active duty service may apply for full time duty under instruction for nurse anesthesia training. The program is 30 months long and is divided into two phases. First students attend Georgetown University for 12 months of didactic instruction, and complete clinical training for 18 months at Naval Hospital Jacksonville or Naval Medical Centers San Diego or Portsmouth, Va.

Students undergoing training in Jacksonville also receive specialty clinical training at civilian Shands Medical Center for complicated obstetrics, neurosurgery, vascular surgery and open-heart surgery.

"This could not be done without the support of everyone at both facilities," said Cmdr. Joseph Kelly, Nurse Corps, who is the instructor and research coordinator for the program.

Three students are currently enrolled in the program working toward graduation in 2004. They are Lt. Cmdr. Jennifer Moore, Lt. Shawn Rose and Lt. Ken Wofford, all Nurse Corps members.

-usn-

Sperm Bank Deposits Are Your Personal Business From American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - Some news media are running stories about men in uniform opening accounts in sperm banks in case they're deployed and come home infertile.

The Defense Department takes no position on cryobank facilities and has no programs or policies encouraging or discouraging their use, said Dr. Michael Kilpatrick of DoD's Deployment Health Support Directorate. Further, the department doesn't intrude on individuals' private family planning decisions.

In other words, he said, freeze your sperm for a rainy day if you want. If you do, though, chalk it up as a personal choice and not to it being necessary because of evidence from the Gulf War.

"There isn't any "Gulf War evidence," he added.

Citing just a few statements from DoD's comprehensive GulfLINK Web site:

- Of the more than 200 Gulf War studies and research projects done over the past 12 years by the departments of Defense, Health and Human Services and Veterans Affairs, none has surfaced medical indications that infertility or birth defects should be a concern to deploying service members.

- A 1995-98 Department of Veterans Affairs

study of 15,000 male Gulf War veterans and 15,000 male non-deployed vets revealed that more Gulf War vets became fathers -2,236 - than those who hadn't deployed - 1,689.

Research today shows the rate of birth defects in children of Gulf War veterans is comparable to that of non-deployed vets.

-usn-

HealthWatch: Glaucoma Can Steal Vision Without Warning
By Aveline V. Allen, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

WASHINGTON - Visual health is paramount to maintaining good eyesight, but there may be hidden risks you don't see coming your way. Did you know 3 million Americans have glaucoma, but only half of that number know they have it?

The Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF) defines glaucoma as a group of eye diseases that gradually steals sight without warning and many times without symptoms. Injury or damage to the optic nerve is what causes vision loss with this disease.

The two main types of glaucoma are open angle and angle closure.

"The most common type of open angle glaucoma is primary open angle glaucoma," said Cmdr. Kerry E. Hunt, Medical Corps, Navy specialty leader for ophthalmology. "In most, but not all cases, the pressure within the eye slowly increases and exerts pressure on the optic nerve. The underlying cause of increased pressure within the eye is poorly understood."

There are virtually no symptoms associated with open angle glaucoma, and no real warning signs to let you know it's coming. If it is not detected and treated in the early stages, you will slowly lose your vision.

The second type of glaucoma, angle closure glaucoma, also known as narrow angle glaucoma, makes the eye pressure rise very quickly. The GRF explains that this type of glaucoma is more rare than open angle glaucoma.

"With this type of glaucoma, fluid within the eye is blocked from exiting and the pressure can rise quickly and to very high levels," said Hunt.

The space between the iris and cornea are somewhat narrow and not as wide and open as normal. Some of the symptoms included with this type of glaucoma are headaches, eye pain, nausea, and very blurred vision.

"Both of these types of glaucoma are treatable with medication, most likely with eye drops or surgery," said Hunt.

In some cases, doctors may use both eye drops and surgery to correct the problem. Both forms of treatment allow the fluid to drain from the eye and, or lessens the amount of fluid that the eye produces.

"In the recent years, several excellent advancements in therapy have occurred," said Capt.

Matthew J. Nutaitis, Medical Corps, an ophthalmologist at National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md.

"Treatment is available. Patients should not hesitate to get a full eye exam to make sure their eyes are healthy," said Nutaitis.

Anyone may get glaucoma, but the risks are higher for some individuals. The GRF reports those at higher risk include African Americans, Asian Americans, persons over 60 years old, or those with a family history of glaucoma and eye injuries.

Medical experts recommend those at higher risk have a complete eye exam with eye dilation every one to two years.

"Ophthalmologists have many successful treatment options to offer their patients with glaucoma," said Nutaitis. "Early diagnosis, before permanent damage occurs, is the key to preserving vision during a patient's lifetime."

For more information, visit the GRF website, www.glaucoma.org.

-usn-

Got news? MEDNEWS wants your stories, ideas and articles. Contact the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's public affairs office at jakdavis@us.med.navy.mil, 202 762-3218/3319.